

News Release

U of M Crookston Celebrates New Wellness Center with Ceremonial Groundbreaking on Monday, September 22, 2014

*By Itollefs on Monday, September 22, 2014*A ceremonial ground breaking for a new wellness center at the University of Minnesota Crookston took place on Monday, September 22, 2014. The day began with an announcement of a \$1 million gift for the wellness center project by Les and June Nielsen and names the lobby of the building in memory of their son, Mitch Lien Nielsen. Guests for the ceremony included University of Minnesota President Eric Kaler, members of the U of M Board of Regents Clyde Allen and Thomas Devine, and several members of the Minnesota Legislature. Construction of the facility will begin next year with anticipated completion in 2016.

"This project is a testament to the 'can do' collaborative partnerships that are a hallmark of this remarkable region, community, and campus," said Fred Wood, chancellor of the U of M Crookston. "The Wellness Center will assist with student success by helping us recruit, retain, and graduate our students. It will strengthen our academic mission and teach our students to be well-rounded individuals."

The wellness facility will be transformational for the campus as well as an asset for the community. When completed, the new wellness center will be approximately 36,000 square feet featuring a two-court recreational gymnasium space, workout and fitness spaces, locker rooms, public spaces, a classroom, and a multipurpose room.

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton signed the 2014 Legislative Bonding Bill last May. The bill included state funding for several projects for the University of Minnesota system, one of which was a \$10 million allocation for a Wellness Center at the Crookston campus. An additional \$5 million will be raised for the project through philanthropic efforts.

Background

The UMC Sports Center was originally built in 1930 when the campus was a residential high school. It was significantly updated only once--in 1980 when Lysaker Gymnasium was added along with some additional office space and training rooms. The central core of the facility, Knutson Gymnasium, is more than 80 years old and houses the current fitness and exercise area. The Sports Center is shared by varsity athletics, intramural sports, and the student body. Because of the need for student-athletes to use the facility for conditioning, practice and training, it is overcrowded and virtually inaccessible to most other students. In addition to overcrowding and age, the inadequate size of the UMC Sports Center has meant limited space for equipment--there are only 15 cardio machines and a small weight room for a campus population of roughly 1000.

Winters, especially those like this past year's severely cold and long winter, make it difficult if not impossible for students to exercise outdoors for much of the academic year, and the need is great for students to have access to healthy recreation year-round.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 29 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 36 concentrations on campus--as well as 13 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from more than 20 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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